DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 278 793 CE 046 261

TITLE Adult Basic Education Final Report 1984-85. OEA Evaluation Report.
INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn. Office of Educational Assessment.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 38p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Adult Basic Education; Adult Literacy; *Adult Students; Basic Skills; Educational Attainment; Employment Patterns; English (Second Language); Enrollment; *High School Equivalency Programs; Literacy Education; *Outcomes of Education; Out of School Youth; Program Administration; *Program Effectiveness; Program Implementation; School Attitudes; Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics; Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS *New York (New York)

ABSTRACT

The Adult Basic Education/High School Equivalency Services Program of the New York City Board of Education's Office of Adult and Continuing Education provides services for out-of-school youth and adults at over 300 sites throughout the city. Instruction is provided in the areas of basic literacy, basic education, high school equivalency, and English as a second language (ESL). Basic education is offered in Spanish, French, Greek, and Italian, and both bilingual education and ESL are divided into four levels of proficiency. Between the 1984-1985 and 1985-1986 school years, the program grew from 368 to 721 classes. In 1984-1985, 39 percent of the students enrolled were immigrants, 41 percent were U.S. citizens, and 12 percent were receiving welfare. In the same year, 47 percent of the student population was Hispanic, 33 percent Black, 10 percent Asian, 9 percent White, and 1 percent American Indian. Approximately a third (6,335) of the 19,492 students enrolled in the program during 1983-1984 were still enrolled in the following year. At least 47 percent of the program's level 1 students progressed at least one level in this year as did 59 percent of the level 2 students. Twenty-seven percent of the level 3 students progressed to level 4. Two-year employment data were available for 5,466 students. Of the 2,518 students who were unemployed and available for work in 1983-1984, 13 percent found employment by 1983-1984. The program was perceived positively by most of the students, teachers, and administrators interviewed. (MN)

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ED278793

Evaluation Section Report
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ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

FINAL REPORT
1984-85

OEA Evaluation Report

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SUMMARY

The Adult Basic Education High School Equivalency (A.B.E./ H.S.E.) Services Program provides services for out-of-school youth and adults at over 300 sites throughout the city. The program provides instruction in basic literacy (B.L.) basic education (B.E.), high school equivalency (H.S.E.), and English as a second language (E.S.L.). Each component has its specific goals although in general the program strives to bring program participants to a higher level of literacy and to help them explore their vocational and educational options.

During the 1984-85 school year, the program received additional funding which allowed it to grow from 368 to 721 classes. Finding new sites for the expanded program was somewhat difficult. Organizing and supplying single class sites and night classes was especially difficult.

Student characteristics remained fairly constant from 1983-84 to 1984-85. Nearly 40 percent of the students were immigrants, up from 31 percent in 1983-84. One-fourth of those who left in 1984-85 completed the program, and another 11 percent transferred to another program. Health reasons, problems with childcare, and transportation difficulties, were among the other reasons for leaving.

Thirty-three percent of the 1984-85 participants were also enrolled in the program during 1983-84. Of these students, 43 percent of the B.E. students and 44 percent of E.S.L. students progressed to a higher proficiency level in 1984-85. In addition, 14 percent of the students moved to programs requiring higher competency in oral English or basic reading or writing between 1983-84 and 1984-85. Over one-half of the students enrolled during both years improved on standardized math tests; 72 percent improved their standardized reading scores and 90 percent showed gains on a test of oral English proficiency.

Among the recommendations included in the report are the following:

- Objectives for each program should be made more specific than the broad program goals that now exist.
- Program administrators should consider reorganizing the expanded program. In particular consideration should be given to eliminating the smaller sites having only one or two classes.
- Central staff should investigate ways to reduce the amount of paperwork and should consider the possibility of hiring additional clerical staff.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Introduction	1
	Program Background	1
	Program Objectives	2
	Scope of the Evaluation	3
II.	Program Organization and Implementation	5
	Administration	5
	Sites and Scheduling	8
	Curriculum and Teaching	9
III.	Student Profiles	11
	Student Characteristics	11
	Perceptions of Program	13
IV.	Student Outcomes	16
	Employment and Personal Advancement	16
	Discharges	17
V.	Two Year Comparison of Achievement Outcomes	19
	Course Levels	20
	Academic Achievement	23
	Employment Status	28
VI.	Conclusions and Recommendations	31

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	A Two-Year Comparison of Students by Language Category	12
2	A Two-Year Comparison of the Percentage of Students Leaving the Program for Particular Reasons	18
3	A Two-Year Comparison of the Percentage of Basic Education Students at Each Course Level	21
4	A Two-Year Comparison of the Percentage of English as a Second Language Students at Each Course Level	22
5	Change in Mean Test Scores For All Students	24
6	A Two-Year Comparison of E.S.L. Students' Mean John Test Scores	26
7	A Two-Year Comparison of Basic Education Students' Mean Reading and Math Test Scores	27
8	A Two-Year Comparison of High School Equivalency Students' Mean Math and Reading Test Scores	29

I. INTRODUCTION

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The Adult Basic Education/High School Equivalency (A.B.E./H.S.E.) Services Program of the Board of Education's Office of Adult and Continuing Education provides services for out-of-school youth and adults at over 300 sites throughout the city. The program is administered through 13 regional offices; central administration is located at the Office of Adult and Continuing Education's headquarters on Baltic Street in Brooklyn.

This program provides instruction in the following components:

- Basic literacy (B.L.) is offered to students reading below fifth grade level and focuses on teaching reading and writing skills.
- Basic education (B.E.) is offered to students reading between fifth and seventh grade levels and focuses on reading, language skills, and math.
- High school equivalency (H.S.E.) is offered to students reading above seventh grade.
- English as a second language (E.S.L.) classes facilitate the development of competence and fluency in English by increasing vocabulary and grammar skills.

Basic education is offered in Spanish, French, Greek and Italian. High school equivalency instruction is provided in English, French, and Spanish. Both B.E. and E.S.L. are divided into four different levels of proficiency.

Classes are established in response to requests from advocacy agencies (e.g., social service agencies, unions, city agencies) that represent specific clienteles. These classes are offered in schools, community-based organizations, hospitals and

union sites; they are scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays and Saturdays to accommodate working people. There are also centers with multiple and expanded services such as referrals to on-site and satellite instructional and occupational classes, personal guidance services, and life skills instruction. Each of these centers has a resource center consisting of a library, multimedia materials, a clearing house for professional development, and a directory of community resources. Learning labs have also been established in these centers to improve individualized learning.

Traditionally, the A.B.E. program has served out-of-school youth (ages 16-21) and adults needing the skills outlined above. During 1983-84 over half of the students in need of basic literacy/education skills were unemployed and one quarter were on public assistance. From 50 to 60 percent of the students are limited in their English proficiency.

Until the 1983-84 school year, funding support for the A.B.E./H.S.E. program came primarily from federal sources. In 1984-85 the New York State Legislature and the Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC) provided additional funding which allowed the program to expand to its present size.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The major objective of the Adult Basic Education Program is to offer instruction and support services to an out-of-school youth and adult population. In an effort to reach the least educated members of the population, this program strives to

create the conditions that will encourage the learner to come to class and make progress. This includes the establishment of a learning environment which is accepting and encouraging, as well as an instructional strategy which diagnoses learning needs and provides instruction that will meet those needs. Following are the stated goals of the program:

- The goal of the Basic Literacy/Education component is to bring participants to a higher level of literacy and to enroll students in further educational programs.
- The goal of the High School Preparation component is the attainment of a General Equivalency Diploma (G.E.D.).
- The goal of the E.S.L. program is to offer English language instruction that will provide students with the language skills necessary to facilitate their development as independent members of society.
- The goal of the support services component is to help students explore their vocational and educational options.

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The Office of Educational Assessment/High School Evaluation Unit (O.E.A./H.S.E.U.) used a number of sources in evaluating the 1984-85 A.B.E./H.S.E. program. The evaluation team conducted site visits and interviews with nine assistant coordinators, 33 teachers, and 45 students to gather qualitative data. Quantitative data such as test scores, enrollment and attendance rates were collected from project records for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

In the following report Chapter II describes the program implementation during 1983-84 and 1984-85, focusing on the expansion of services during 1984-85. Chapter III describes the students and includes their perceptions of the program. Student

outcomes highlighting data which demonstrate significant change during 1984-85 are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V is an analysis of achievement data for students who were in the program for both 1983-84 and 1984-85. Chapter VI contains conclusions and recommendations.

II. PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Adult Basic Education/High School Equivalency Services Program provides basic educational training to adults over the age of 16 throughout the five boroughs of New York City. The program is organized into 13 geographic regions. Each region is directed by an assistant coordinator who is supported by an instructional facilitator, a counselor, an intake teacher, and a variety of instructional paraprofessionals and clerical workers. An assistant director oversees the central office with the support of education administrators. This office provides support to the regional centers through a citywide staff development unit, a job developer to seek employment for students, and a bilingual instructional facilitator.

Students in these programs can take a variety of classes ranging from basic literacy through high school equivalency. Basic literacy is offered to students functioning up to 4.9 in reading grade equivalents. Students who read between 5.0 and 7.9 in grade equivalents may take basic education courses (Basic literacy and basic education were generally classified into one group by program staff). Students who read at or above 8.0 in grade equivalents are eligible for high school equivalency classes.

ADMINISTRATION

The program structure consists of a central administrative component and regional offices which handle all field responsi-

bilities. Each region has appropriate administration, support services and clerical staff, and affords a range of instructional opportunities. The number of classes for which each regional administrator is responsible varies depending on the geographic area which needs to be covered, the number of sites assigned, the proportion of day and evening classes, and the variety of six, nine, and fifteen hour-a-week classes. As far as possible each region encompasses a full range of services from entry level basic education and/or English as a second language to high school equivalency preparation.

Assistant coordinators supervise staff and educational sites, act as community liaisons, find and open new sites, and orient new teachers. O.E.A./H.S.E.U. staff interviewed nine assistant coordinators. Six of the nine coordinators interviewed were satisfied with the professional support provided by the central office and five added that they found the central office personally supportive. One coordinator was given additional staff during a time of personal stress, and some found the central office to be most understanding of the problems of students in the program. Those dissatisfied with the central office included four coordinators who said they were not given adequate time for administrative tasks, four who said they had experienced poor communications, and two who cited difficulty in the acquisition of materials. In response to a query about how the central office could better serve the regions, four coordinators said improved communications would help, and two wanted more

local decision-making. "Be a clearinghouse, support, and staff center," wrote one coordinator, "but leave final decisions to the regions."

A sample of 33 teachers were interviewed by O.E.A./H.S.E.U. staff. Seventy percent of these teachers said they had a good relationship with their supervisors and 27 percent added that their supervisors were "very accessible." Just over half of the teachers thought they had a good relationship with the on-site counselors, but 30 percent said they had minimal contact or did not know the counselor at all. Teachers' relationships with the instructional facilitators, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly positive. Eighty-eight percent said the facilitators were good or helpful, with only 12 percent not knowing or having limited contact with the facilitator.

A majority of coordinators and teachers commented on the excessive amount of paperwork and record keeping that was required of them. Two-thirds (N = 6) of the coordinators interviewed said the large amount of paperwork was their primary dissatisfaction with the job, compared to only one coordinator who was dissatisfied with the salary. When asked what changes they would make in the program, over half of the assistant coordinators said that they would reduce paperwork and one-third said that they would hire more clerical staff.

Coordinators and teachers were strongly identified with the goals and objectives of the A.B.E./H.S.E. program. All of the coordinators supported the educational objectives and added some

comments such as, "They are noble," and "agree with the objectives totally, completely, and utterly." Eighty-five percent of the teachers were sufficiently motivated to want to continue in education, and 94 percent believed there was room for creativity and growth in their jobs.

SITES AND SCHEDULING

The A.B.E./H.S.E. program is offered at over 200 sites which vary in size and services offered. During the 1984-85 year the program grew from 368 classes in 1983-84 to 721 classes. Three-fourths of the teachers interviewed stated that the physical environment made a difference in the program. In particular, teachers favored hub sites over single class sites because of the opportunity for interaction with other staff and better interaction among students. Other reasons for favoring hub sites included better physical conditions, more access to supervisors and to materials, and better security. Teachers also believed that small sites or single class sites were perceived by students as "non-school" environments, causing them to take their studies less seriously.

Finding new sites for the expanded A.B.E./H.S.E. program was a concern of some administrators. Twenty-two percent of the assistant coordinators said they had difficulty with site selection and with arrangements for supervisors to cover each site. Arranging for single class sites and for night classes was especially difficult, as was the movement of books and supplies

to single class sites. Some administrators indicated that one solution to these problems was to establish more hub sites. Another problem was with time conflicts with other groups using the sites. As one administrator said: "One of the problems is an on-going lack of its own physical plant. If a host school needs space, the A.B.E. programs can be out on the street almost overnight."

In the scheduling of classes, program staff were to take into account the varied work schedules of the students. Just over one-third of the teachers surveyed thought scheduling was good, but 18 percent suggested that more varied schedules are needed to meet students' needs. For instance, the schedule of some classes caused women to leave the centers early to pick up their children at school.

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

The curricula for all programs were written by committees of teachers, instructional facilitators, and student liaison teachers. Of the 45 interviewed in the sample, over 95 percent said they found the curriculum materials used to be "useful" or "very useful."

Teachers did not rate the curricula for the specific program in which they were teaching, but they were asked to rate "materials development"; 73 percent said they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied." A negative evaluation was offered by only 15 percent of the teachers surveyed, who said that the aspect of the job that was "professionally most dissatisfying" to them was

"poor materials." Ten percent of the teachers interviewed were concerned with the poor curriculum.

Teachers were rated highly by the students. The interviewed students unanimously thought that the teachers had been either "helpful" or "very helpful." When questioned about areas in which the A.B.E. program had met their expections, several of the 45 students specifically referred to the "good teachers."

One unique characteristic of the A.B.E. program is the use of "open classes." Students can enter the program at any time during the year without having to wait for the beginning of a term or semester. One-third of the staff said this policy met the students' needs. Other positive comments included the realization that "interested people come and others drop out," that it is "important to get students when they are motivated," and that it "encourages those participating to spread the word and allows people to come when they are ready." More neutral comments recognized that open classrooms require instructors to be "flexible and take students from where they are" and that such a scheme is "unavoidable in the adult world." However, one-third of the teachers found this policy difficult to manage. Those teachers who found this open system difficult thought that it created a "problem in basic literacy courses where progress is rapid, and "created too many different levels of learning for one teacher to monitor." Several teachers also thought that it is often very "difficult to do anything for students that come late in the term."

III. STUDENT PROFILES

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of the student population remained fairly constant during this two year period. In 1983-84 immigrants comprised about 31 percent of the total student population and in 1984-85, 39 percent were immigrants. U.S. citizens made up 37 percent of the students as compared to 41 percent in 1984-85. The percentage of welfare recipients was 15 percent in 1983-84 and 12 percent in 1984-85.

Racial characteristics and other descriptors remained constant during the two year period. During 1983-84, 45 percent of the students were Hispanic, 32 percent black, 11 percent white, 11 percent Asian, and one percent American Indian. In 1984-85, 47 percent of the student population was Hispanic, 33 percent black, 10 percent Asian, nine percent white and one percent American Indian. Thirty-eight percent were employed while they were attending classes, 34 percent were unemployed and looking for work, and 16 percent were unemployed and unavailable for work.* No employment information was available for the remaining 12 percent.

For the purpose of placement, students were categorized in 12 language groups. The number and percentage of students in each category for both 1983-84 and 1984-85 is contained in Table 1. The majority of students served by the program were enrolled

*These students were those most deficient in English language skills.

TABLE 1
A Two-Year Comparison of Students by Language Category*

Category **	1983-84		1984-85	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Zero to 2.9: First Language English	434	5	789	4
Zero to 2.9: First Language English, Family Other	90	1	163	1
Three to 4.9: First Language English	405	4	918	4
Three to 4.9: First Language English, Family Other	111	1	316	1
Zero to 2.9: First Language NOT English	43	- ***	313	1
Three to 4.9: First Language NOT English	799	1	487	2
Five to 8.9: All	3103	26	7555	33
E.S.L. 1	2488	27	6258	28
E.S.L. 2	1073	12	2271	10
E.S.L. 3	952	11	1707	7
E.S.L. 4	516	6	867	4
Reading Instruction in Native Language	540	6	1053	5
Total	9106	100	22,697	100

*Data were available for only 47 percent of the 1983-84 participants and 67 percent of the 1984-85 participants.

**These categories represent the program's various literacy groupings.

***Percentage equals less than one percent.

- Although the number of students served increased substantially, the proportion of students in each category generally remained the same.

in either the 5.0 to 8.9 grade equivalent category or in E.S.L. I during both years. It is striking to note that with the increase in funding for 1984-85, over 900 students at the lowest level of literacy, those reading between zero and 2.9 in grade equivalents were served.

PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRAM

Forty-five students from nine of the 13 regions were interviewed about the A.B.E./H.S.E. program during the 1984-85 evaluation. Of those students, 22 had been in class from one week to five months, 12 from six to ten months, and 11 for a longer period. The average length of time these students had been in the program was 7.9 months.

Intake and Placement

Two student liaison teachers (S.L.T.s) worked in each region, one assigned to intake and assessment and one assigned to provide individual and small group guidance for career education and planning. S.L.T.s also made appropriate referrals to outside agencies. Intake procedures assessed both the affective and instructional needs of students. Each student was given the opportunity to review his or her weaknesses and strengths in individual conferences with the S.L.T.s.

Students in the sample were asked about the speed of the intake procedure, the courteousness of the S.L.T., and the appropriateness of the placement. Students rated the speed of intake on a four-point scale from "very slow" to "very fast."

Over 75 percent rated the speed of intake as "fast" or "very fast." Students also rated the treatment they received during intake as either "very courteous," "courteous," or "discourteous." Ninety-eight percent of the students described their treatment as courteous or very courteous. Finally students rated the appropriateness of their placement. Over half judged the placement as "very appropriate." None of the students thought the placement was inappropriate. Students were also asked whether or not the intake process allowed them to ask questions and, if so, whether the answers were helpful. Ninety-five percent indicated they were able to ask such questions and 93 percent indicated that the answers to their questions were helpful.

Counseling and Referrals

Although the intake procedure was highly rated, the counseling half of the S.L.T. function seemed less successful. Some students had received individual and group counseling, but a large number had received neither. Only 47 percent of the sample knew the counselor in his or her program and only 27 percent had actually met with a counselor for an individual session. Thirty-three percent had met with a counselor in a group session. Of those who saw a counselor, 67 percent found the visit to be "useful" or "very useful."

Several of the students interviewed reported they had received information about health services, work study programs, childcare and college study. Some had received employment

referrals. Staff reports indicate a substantial number of referrals during the 1984-85 year: 379 referrals were made to health agencies, 393 to social service agencies, 1,590 to educational services, and 588 to other agencies.

IV. STUDENT OUTCOMES

EMPLOYMENT AND PERSONAL ADVANCEMENT

This chapter and the following chapter discuss the program's impact on students. The present chapter discusses the impact of the program on students' employment prospects and self-concepts. The data used for this analysis come from interviews with a sample of students by O.E.A./H.S.E.U. staff members, and from information supplied by the program staff for the entire population. Academic performance is discussed in Chapter V.

Forty-five students were interviewed by O.E.A./H.S.E.U. Enthusiastic individual comments from the students interviewed indicate that the A.B.E./H.S.E. program was perceived as contributing to participants' employment prospects and personal well-being. Thirty-one percent (N = 14) of the 45 students surveyed were not employed, but most believed that their studies would contribute to future employment prospects. "It has given me the courage to fill out applications and go for interviews," reported one student, and another said, "It makes me feel more capable, more self-confident."

Other students cited more specific reasons for believing their studies enhanced employment prospects: four responded that they had improved their English speaking, four had improved their reading, and two had improved writing. "I can read signs," and "When I first started work I was afraid to speak English; now I talk," were among the responses. Thirteen percent (N = 6) of the students said that their increased self-confidence would be the

factor that would contribute most to improving their employment and 27 percent (N = 12) said increased self-confidence had been the program's greatest impact on their personal lives.

DISCHARGES

Reason for separation from the program was available for 93 percent (N = 14,892) of the students leaving in 1983-84 and for 70 percent (N = 8,403) of the students leaving in 1984-85. A two-year comparison of the percentage of students leaving the program for different reasons is presented in Table 2. As shown in this table in 1984-85, 25 percent of the students left because they completed the program, up from 10 percent during the previous year. However, only one percent left because they received a G.E.D., down from 11 percent the year before. During 1983-84, 59 percent of the students left the program as returning/rollover students as compared to only five percent in 1984-85. This difference, however, is the result of a change in the way program administrators reported data. During 1983-84 any student who was taking spring classes and was expecting to come back in the fall was classified as a returning/rollover student. However, program staff decided that this classification was not an accurate or meaningful reflection of which students did, in fact, return. Therefore, in 1984-85, teachers were instructed to categorize as returning/rollover only those students who were leaving the program at times other than June with plans to return in the next term.

TABLE 2

A Two-Year Comparison of the Percentage of Students Leaving the Program for Particular Reasons

Reason	1983-84		1984-85	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Health	178	1	560	6
Child Care Problems	81	-- *	342	3
Transportation Problems	48	--	201	2
Family Programs	208	1	508	5
Location of Class	48	--	107	1
Course Not Helpful	23	--	109	1
Time of Class	150	--	459	5
Student Moved	144	--	435	5
Transfer	1300	10	2770	11
Completion of Program	1575	10	2322	25
Returning/Rollover**	8968	59	464	5
G.E.D.	1872	11	106	1
Other Known Reason	297	8	20	30
Total	14,892	100	8403	100

*This number is less than one percent.

**The decline in the percentage of Returning/Rollover students reflects a change in the way program staff reported data. See text for a more complete explanation of this change. Because of these changes in reporting, data may not be comparable.

- There was a 15 percent increase in the percentage of students completing the program in 1984-85.
- Ten percent fewer students took the G.E.D. exam in 1984-85 relative to 1983-84.

V. TWO-YEAR COMPARISON OF ACHIEVEMENT OUTCOMES

In order to determine the program's impact on students, O.E.A./H.S.E.U. conducted a series of analyses on the data for students enrolled during both the 1983-84 and 1984-85 program years. Approximately 33 percent (6,335) of the 19,492 students enrolled during 1983-84 were also enrolled in the program the following year*. Three types of analyses were performed. The first examined changes in course level for students over the two years. Upon entry, E.S.L. and B.E. students were assigned by program staff to one of four increasingly advanced levels depending upon their skills proficiency as measured by test scores and teacher assessment. O.E.A./H.S.E.U. compared each student's course level in 1983-84 and in 1984-85 to see if any progress had been made. A second analysis concerned students' test scores. For E.S.L. students, the analysis focused on students' performance on the John Test of English oral proficiency. For B.E. and H.S.E. students, the evaluation team used standardized reading and math scores on the Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) to assess progress. Finally, changes in students' employment status from 1983-84 to 1984-85 were also examined. Following are the results of each of these analyses.

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*The fact that students were in the program for two years suggests that they may have been more highly motivated than other students resulting in a tendency for them to improve.

COURSE LEVELS

Since a student's course level is determined by performance on tests and teacher evaluations, advancement in course level in the B.E. and E.S.L. programs is assumed to be a measure of learning and achievement. A comparison of B.E. and E.S.L. students' 1983-84 and 1984-85 course levels appears in Tables 3 and 4, respectively. Sixty-three percent of the two-year B.E. and 71 percent of the two-year E.S.L. students had course level data for both years, further decreasing the size of the sample and limiting the generalizability of findings.

As shown in Table 3, 47 percent of the Level One B.E. students progressed at least one level as did 59 percent of the Level Two students.* Twenty-seven percent of Level Three students progressed to Level Four.

A similar pattern of progress is evident for E.S.L. students in Table 4. As indicated, 58 percent of the E.S.L. Level One students progressed by at least one level as did 46 percent of those who were initially Level Two students. Also, 30 percent of Level Three students progressed more than one level. Twenty-one percent of the Level Two students advanced to Level Four.

Overall, 43 percent of the B.E. students and 44 percent of the E.S.L. students progressed to a higher level in 1984-85. Thus, analyses show that over two-fifths of students in both the

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*This percentage represents the percentage of 1983-84 Level One students who progressed to Level Two, Three, and Four during 1984-85.

TABLE 3

A Two-Year Comparison of the Percentage of Basic Education Students at Each Course Level

1983-84 Course Level	N*	1984-85 Course Level			
		One	Two	Three	Four
One	406	53%	42%	4%	1%
Two	439	4	37	43	16
Three	405	4	11	58	27
Four**	52				

*Includes all students who had valid course level information for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

**Information for Level Four students is not included in this table since they could not progress to a higher level.

- Forty-seven percent of the B.E. students who entered Level One in 1983-84 moved to a higher level the following year.
- Fifty-nine percent of the 1983-84 Level Two B.E. students moved to a higher level the following year.
- Twenty-seven percent of the 1983-84 Level Three B.E. students moved to a higher level the following year.

TABLE 4

A Two-Year Comparison of the Percentage of
English as a Second Language Students at Each Course Level

1983-84 Course Level	N*	1984-85 Course Level			
		One	Two	Three	Four
One	929	42%	29%	21%	8%
Two	531	17	37	23	23
Three	417	17	17	36	30
Four**	186				

*Includes all students who had valid achievement information for both 1983-84.

**Information for Level Four students is not included in this table since they could not progress to a higher level.

- Over half (58 percent) of the E.S.L. students who entered Level One in 1983-84 progressed to a higher level in 1984-85.
- Forty-six percent of the 1983-84 Level Two students E.S.L. progressed to a higher level in 1984-85.
- Thirty percent of the 1983-84 Level Three E.S.L. students progressed to a higher level in 1984-85.

B.E. and E.S.L. programs made progress from 1983-84 to 1984-85.

Although most of the two-year B.E. and E.S.L. students remained in those programs for 1984-85, seven percent of the E.S.L. students moved to B.E., and seven percent of the B.E. students moved to H.S.E. Since the B.E. program assumes some competency in English oral language and H.S.E. assumes some basic reading and writing skills, these moves are another indication of the progress made by A.B.E. students.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Overall Improvement

The distribution of students who did and did not show gains on achievement tests is presented in Table 5. As indicated in this table, 53 percent of the students showed improvement on the TABE math achievement test from 1983-84 to 1984-85, 72 percent showed gains in the TABE reading achievement test, and 90 percent showed gains on the John Test of English oral proficiency. Following is a more detailed analysis and discussion of the students' performance on each of these tests.

John Test

John Test raw scores for both 1983-84 and 1984-85 were reported for fifty-five percent (1,576) of the two-year E.S.L. students. The analysis of these test results is contained in Table 6. The mean raw score for students was 33.8 in 1983-84 and 58.6 in 1984-85, a difference of 24.7 points. The evaluation

TABLE 5

Change in Mean Test Scores For All Students

Test	N*	No Gain	Gain
TABE Math	467	47%	53%
TABE Reading	1,490	28	72
John Test**	1,576	10	90

*Includes those students with scores for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

**The John Test results are only for students in E.S.L.

- The TABE math scores of over one-half of the students taking this test improved; nearly three-fourths of the TABE reading scores improved and nine-tenths of the scores of students taking the John Test improved.

team calculated an effect size (E.S.) to assess the educational meaningfulness of the mean gain.* As indicated in Table 6, an effect size of this magnitude (E.S. = 1.24) is considered highly significant, demonstrating educationally meaningful improvement in test scores.

TABE Tests of Math and Reading

The evaluation team also compared 1983-84 and 1984-85 TABE grade equivalent math and reading scores for B.E. and H.S.E. students. O.E.A./H.S.E.U. used grade equivalent scores in this analysis because they were the only scores reported**.

In the B.E. program, math scores were available for 17 percent (345) of the two-year B.E. students, and reading scores were available for 56 percent (1,153) of these students. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 7. For B.E.

*The effect size, developed by Jacob Cohen, is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. According to Cohen, 0.2 is a small E.S., 0.5 is a moderate E.S., and 0.8 is considered to be a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful.

**It is important to be cautious in the interpretation of grade equivalents, since they are often used incorrectly. Grade equivalents are not directly comparable across different tests. Furthermore, grade equivalents should not be used in statistical calculations since their units are not equal. An improvement of 0.4 grade equivalent units may be more educationally significant at very low grade levels than when scores are on or above grade level. Generally, O.E.A./H.S.E.U. would not report an analysis based only on grade equivalents, however it was the only analysis that could be done since the form and levels for the TABE test were also not reported, making it impossible to determine scaled scores which allow statistical comparison. The following analyses are presented with these caveats in mind.

TABLE 6

A Two-Year Comparison of E.S.L. Students'
Mean John Test Scores

Program Year	N*	Raw Score	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size
1983-84	1,576	33.8	22.2	24.7	19.9	1.24**
1984-85		58.6	18.7			

*Includes all students who had valid achievement information for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

**The effect size developed by Jacob Cohen, is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. According to Cohen, 0.2 is a small E.S., 0.5 is a moderate E.S., and 0.8 is considered to be a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful. An effect size of this magnitude is considered highly significant demonstrating educationally meaningful improvement in test scores.

- The magnitude of the improvement in test scores from 1983-84 to 1984-85 indicates that students enrolled in the program for two years made substantial educational progress as measured by their scores on the John test.

TABLE 7

A Two-Year Comparison of Basic Education Students' Mean Reading and Math Test Scores

Program Year	N*	Mean G.E. **	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size***
Reading						
1983-84	1,153	4.8	1.8	12.0	17.4	.69
1984-85		6.0	2.3			
Math						
1983-84	345	5.4	1.6	2.4	23.4	.10
1984-85		5.6	2.2			

*Includes all students who had valid achievement information for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

**G.E.=grade equivalent

***The effect size developed by Jacob Cohen, is the ratio of the mean gain to the standard deviation of the gain. This ratio provides an index of improvement in standard deviation units irrespective of the size of the sample. According to Cohen, 0.2 is a small E.S., 0.5 is a moderate E.S., and 0.8 is considered to be a large E.S. Only effect sizes of 0.8 and above are considered to be educationally meaningful. This value is considered of moderate educational significance.

- Students grade equivalent reading scores increased moderately from 1983-84 to 1984-85.
- The difference in students' grade equivalent math scores were not educationally meaningful.

students, the average grade equivalent score in math was 5.4 for 1983-84 and 5.6 for 1984-85, an average gain of two months. The effect size (E.S. = 0.10) was too small to be considered educationally meaningful. The average reading score for B.E. students was 4.8 in 1983-84 and 6.0 in 1984-85, a gain of one year and two months. The effect size (E.S. = .69) for this comparison indicates a moderate improvement in test scores.

The H.S.E. program math scores were available for only seven percent (109) of the two-year students, and reading scores were available for 19 percent (299) of the students. As shown in Table 8, the average math score in grade equivalents was 6.7 in 1983-84, and 5.9 in 1984-85, a decline of eight months (E.S. = -.31). The average reading score was 8.3 in 1983-84 and 7.7 in 1984-85, a decline of six months (E.S. = -.21). Both these effect sizes are considered to be small.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

A major goal of the A.B.E. program was to increase students' basic skills to make them more employable. There were 5,466 students for whom two-year employment data were available. Student employment status was classified each year as either: (1) unemployed and available for work, (2) unemployed and unavailable for work*, or (3) employed. Of the 2,518 students who were unemployed and available for work in 1983-84, 13 percent found employment by 1984-85. Of the 1,157 students who were unemployed and unavailable for work, nine percent also found employment by the 1984-85 school year. It is assumed that they

TABLE 8

A Two-Year Comparison of High School Equivalency Students' Mean Reading and Math Test Scores

Program Year	N*	Mean G.E.**	S.D.	Mean Difference	S.D. Difference	Effect Size***
Reading						
1983-84	299	8.3	1.7	-0.5	2.4	-.21
1984-85		7.7	2.7			
Math						
1983-84	109	6.7	2.0	-0.8	2.6	-.31
1984-85		5.9	2.4			

*Includes all students who had valid achievement information for both 1983-84 and 1984-85.

**G.E.=grade equivalents.

***The values are considered to be of small educational significance.

- Students' reading and math grade equivalent scores showed small declines from 1983-84 to 1984-85.

became available for work by solving their childcare problems. Of the 1,942 students who were employed in 1983-84, 89 percent remained employed.

*This category includes primarily parents without childcare.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The A.B.E. program greatly expanded services during 1984-85, from approximately 19,000 students in 1983-84 to just over 34,000 students in 1984-85. During both years the program served a largely Hispanic and black population, many with poor basic literacy skills. In both 1983-84 and 1984-85, about one third of the students were immigrants. Although few students actually received their G.E.D., the program did provide B.E. and E.S.L. to large numbers of students and, more importantly, it did promote a small percentage of students to more demanding programs, thus meeting one program goal.

The program was described positively, for the most part, by regional coordinators, students, and teachers. The majority of students rated the teachers highly and thought that the program met their expectations. Program staff endorsed the program's goals. They thought that there was room for creativity in the job, and, because of their positive experience in the program, were motivated to continue teaching. The regional assistant coordinators viewed the central staff as accessible, supportive, and understanding of both teachers and students, though some coordinators expressed a desire for more local decision making and better communication.

Although comments by administrators, teachers, and students were generally very positive, the staff did offer some suggestions for modifying the program. A large percentage of coordinators expressed dismay over what they perceived as

excessive paperwork and a shortage of clerical staff. There were also complaints about the physical settings of some sites. A.B.E. classes located in schools, churches, and union offices used those facilities at the pleasure of the organizations. At times, course meetings were interrupted due to the prior claim of these institutions. Many teachers suggested that the program should be reorganized by increasing the number of "hub" sites and eliminating the sites with only one or two classes.

Another organizational problem was the policy of "open classes" in which students were allowed to enroll at any time during the year. Teachers were split on this policy. Some found that it caused difficulties, especially at the beginning level where advancement was rapid. Teachers thought that the open classes created too many skill levels within a class, putting a strain on the teachers' ability to manage. Some teachers, on the other hand, believed that open classes allow highly motivated students to enter the class immediately.

An analysis of achievement data for two-year students showed generally positive results. Nearly half of two-year E.S.L. and B.E. students moved to more advanced course levels in 1984-85. Over half of the students improved their TABE math scores, nearly three-fourths improved their TABE reading scores and 90 percent of the E.S.L. students improved their score on the John Test of oral English proficiency. However, the interpretation and significance of these data are not clear because of missing test information.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, the following recommendations are made:

1. Program administrators should consider reorganizing the expanded program. In particular consideration should be given to eliminating the smaller sites having only one or two classes.

2. Program administrators should instruct teachers to report raw score units to make evaluation more meaningful. In addition, the level and form of tests should be reported and steps should be taken to insure that complete data are reported for each student.

3. Central staff should investigate ways to reduce the amount of paperwork and should consider the possibility of hiring additional clerical staff.

4. Program administrators should review the appropriateness of teaching materials.

5. Objectives for each program should be made more specific than the broad program goals that now exist.